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# SONNETS



**SONNETS**  
BY  
**FANNY PURDY PALMER**



**PAUL ELDER & COMPANY**  
**PUBLISHERS • SAN FRANCISCO**

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PS  
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**TO MY DAUGHTER  
HENRIETTA**

**I INSCRIBE THESE RECORDS OF  
SCENES IN WHICH WE HAVE BEEN TOGETHER,  
AND OF THOUGHTS AND FANCIES  
WHICH WE HAVE SO OFTEN  
DISCUSSED IN LOVING  
SYMPATHY**

890871



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# SONNETS OF CALIFORNIA



***“Regions Cæsar Never Knew.”***






# CALIFORNIA

## I.

**D**ISTINCTIVELY adorned, with joy  
caressed  
By sun and wind, for Her exalted seat  
The rocks are gold-inlaid, and at Her feet  
An Ocean brings its argosies to rest.  
Pensive Her mien, for close within her breast  
Forest and stream and shifting sands secrete  
The stories of adventurous lives replete  
With daring hopes staked on some baffled Quest.  
Thro' meadows green She muses on her past  
When Mission bells ring out their call to prayer;  
Or, rapt in Self, surveys Her heavens that brood  
O'er lofty Peaks with lonely Valleys vast—  
The bees drone heavy in the honeyed air,  
The Mourning Dove laments in solitude.

## CALIFORNIA

### II.

 HE stolid Indian's tread had crossed this  
land,  
Crossed and recrossed and left but scanty  
trace,

When, from afar, men of a bolder race  
Sighted its shores, set foot upon its sand  
With praise to God; In haste, as rovers, planned  
Return: An interval—and then—gold lace,  
Doubloons, fandangoes, señoritas' grace!  
But, steadily, by plain and pass, a band  
Of Fortune's soldiers armored for the age  
With wit and vigor; for the Wilds endowed  
With prescient resource, strength of stubborn wills,  
Came pressing on to this—their heritage,  
Seeing in dreams its future cities proud  
Of palaces made worthy of their hills.

# CALIFORNIA

## III.

**C**OMPOSITE, unassimilable, crude  
As Her unsmelted ores, the social state  
Where differing races struggle to create  
Their planes of life anew. Needs must  
intrude

Fallacious dreams, false reasonings which delude  
Th' unpracticed mind; But, She'll in time be great  
Enough to find, amid the turns of fate,  
The Way to shun—the Way to be pursued.  
Purples and gold in groves and orchards glow,  
And, housed in pearl, the Abalones cling  
To the wet rocks: Mid fairest scenes at home  
Her people dwell, and tides of travel flow  
From ends of earth;—Such various folk they bring  
As once they brought up to the Cæsars' Rome.

## THE MEADOW-LARK

*Sweet Master of Strange Dialects of Tune.*

**A**LERT his eye, half hushed his liquid note  
When twilight gathers where the barley  
green  
For his rough nest provides a doubtful  
screen;

But bold and high bursts from his swelling throat—  
In praise of the brown mate not far remote—  
His morning lay,—a loud rejoicing pæan  
Wherein the joy of living well has been  
Resolved anew. Later, at times he'll quote  
Some jargon, with a muffled trill to add  
Confidingly, "I'm one of you, Not bad"  
Ripe cherries, eh!" Then, settled for a stay,  
He brings his friends, melodiously gay,  
To revel with him while the world's in tune  
And play the Bacchant 'mong the grapes at noon.

## A SEA-GULL

**H**E WAS not born a safe and happy bird  
To pledge his mate in April evenings how  
Sweet fruits would hang at length from  
yon slim bough  
To feed their callow brood. Too soon he heard  
From an imperilled nest the fateful word  
That calls each to its own: 'Twas his to know  
The driving gale, the spent ship's battered prow,  
The wild tide-vigil; and so, undeterred  
He gave the waves his wings! His frightened heart  
Of all those thundering breakers felt the start!  
No shelter but the cliff for his white breast  
Where, panting, mid the cold salt spray 'tis pressed:  
And last a wave-washed beach and wreck-strewn  
shore  
And beaten bird — whose stormy life is o'er.

## MY GARDEN BY THE SEA

I MADE a garden by th' unmindful Sea  
So close, the breakers tossed among the  
flowers  
Their flecks of foam! Yet, in serenest hours  
Profuse and brilliant, wonderful to see,  
My flowers outvied the waves' temerity:  
Lamarques and Banksias flung their bloom in  
showers;  
From the Old World—with legends for their  
flowers—  
Iris and Cinerarias: Glad to be  
The gayest of them all Geraniums red  
As Cardinals' hats their dazzling clusters spread,  
And Chinese Lilies stood in rows—so white  
You saw them even in the darkest night.  
All was most fair! and then—th' unmindful Sea  
With its grey Breath effaced my flowers and me!

## MONTEREY CYPRESS

**S**ENTINELS old, posted along the way  
Beyond my garden's bounds—a rugged  
Band  
Of Natives staunch, born to the salt sea  
sand,

The fog's embrace, the Winter wind's rough play!  
In sombre garb they greet their Captain grey  
When south winds lash his tides to loud command!—  
The tokens of his rage they understand  
And shuddering at their posts his Will obey.  
Nothing to them is man's intrusive care,  
For lives apart they lead beside the sea  
Rooted in creviced cliffs, where breakers dare  
Stretch wind-curved arms to clasp the twisted tree  
That, yielding, harkens to the roar and moan  
Of the wild ocean when it calls its own!

## WHEN THE OVERLAND STARTS EAST

**A**OOD-BYES all spoken: One last restless  
light  
Still flashing on the gear till word shall tell  
The moment come when, with slow  
clanging bell,  
And like some living creature stretched for flight,  
The long train moves beyond our straining sight.  
The night wind's in our faces. "Is it well,"  
It cries, "to part thus? Fear ye not Farewell?"  
'Tis true we fear it. Few things can requite  
Th' attachments we abandon. Speeds the train!—  
Grappling with mountains, plunged in snow-sheds  
grim,  
Skimming the desolate Lake, across the plain  
Hastening to city brisk and village trim:  
Ocean to Ocean traversed!— We again  
Turn to the mountain Wall, the sunset's Rim.



## LA JOLLA

**H**BARE, brown coast that curves to meet  
the Sea,  
With caves and cliffs where gulls and cur-  
lews dwell,  
And riven rocks whose wave-worn tables tell  
The Past's long story unforgetfully.  
High tides that hold their daily Jubilee  
With flying foam and roar, that leap and swell  
Till the swift Ebb drowning its own wild knell  
Bears all the billows back regretfully ;  
The sky is blue above, the sea below,—  
If care or sorrow ever crossed thy lot  
Rest here and drink of sea and sky thy fill,  
Learn Ocean's Secrets when the tides are low,  
And hear the lark sing! while in yonder spot  
The Silent Sunrise crowns the lonely hill.

## IN A CANYON



WHICH way leads out? Where was the  
entrance to  
This strange domain? No answer but the  
sound


Of your own footfall in the narrow bound  
Whose lofty walls close round you to the blue:  
Here, in the shade a Shape looks down on you;—  
A Giant Warrior crouched against a mound,  
His narrow brow with one tall Yucca crowned  
He waits, till ancient foes their feuds renew.  
There, in the sun up arid heights afar  
Clambers the lonely desert's "bearded brood,"  
While thick along your way the Shooting Star  
With its pale grace and scent of solitude,—  
A Spirit more than blossom—flowers alone  
Within the Canyon's jealous heart, unknown.

## THE CARMEL VALLEY FROM THE RIVER'S MOUTH

**A**ND me new feelings, Heart! New vision,  
Eyes!  
For words befitting beauty that I've  
brought

From other scenes, for this avail me naught.  
Beyond these dunes, where wooded Mountains rise,  
The sense beholds the Earth in Heaven's disguise  
And, stirred, recalls—thro' vernal meadows fraught  
With broideries of flowers in symbols wrought—  
The mediaeval dream of Paradise!  
Mantled in Manzanita lies the way  
Toward the Vale: the light of golden rose  
That after sunset serves the day's delay  
Is over all: the shadowy river flows—  
Bearing, along the silvery sands it laves,  
The Willows' message to the Ocean's waves.

## ROSES

 AFRANOS for the young and fortunate  
Who, with the roses, squander on an hour  
The bloom that comes but once to heart  
or flower:

And fair Arguello's rose for those who wait  
Like her for love's return importunate.  
The lavish Banksias for the dreamer's bower,  
And Brides significant their gifts to shower  
On maids who lead processions of fate.  
With flaring petals wide the Cherokee  
Takes to its heart the moonlight's mystery;  
And there's a rose dear to fastidious eyes,  
In whose complex repose perfection lies  
Beauty's excuse for being to convey —  
'Tis called the Madam Abel Chatenay.

## SEA FOG

**I**MMERGED are all the mountain tops in  
grey  
Of mists that cling to sloping pastures  
green,

And on the crests, the lifting rifts between,  
The shrouded pines appear, to fade away  
Like Phantoms clad in Penitent's array.  
The sky is lost, the fortress'd point, and e'en  
The sated sea. In sight of reefs unseen  
A ghostly ship to windward shuns the Bay.  
The moisture gathers in the muffled Wood  
Where ferns refreshed their plummy branches spread,  
And Lilacs bud, as if they understood  
This medium of Dreams wherein we tread  
Beset by sparkling chains the spiders spin,—  
While from th' unsated sea the fog rolls in.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

**T**HE darkening day that ends the dying Year  
Broods upon dusky wings within my room,  
And at the open door, where roses bloom,  
Wan, wavering Forms, with faltering  
steps, appear

From far and travel worn, to find me Here!  
They are the vanished Years, which reassume  
The guise they wore, peopling the twilight gloom  
With Memories more than heavy heart can bear:  
Yet stay, poor Wanderers, till the New Year's born  
While waning Moon sinks in the placid Sea,  
And the first promise of a laggard morn  
Brings to dejected mood its remedy.  
But, ere the light, back—back to whence you sped!  
For the Old Years, pale ghosts, are dead—are dead.








**POST MERIDIEM**



***“A Sonnet is a coin; its face reveals  
The soul.”***



## COMPENSATION

OO passionate Heart, resenting in thy Day  
Of lordly hopes and limitless despair  
Life's lost illusions, let me lead you where  
Sweet Nature hides her waste; in careless  
way

Her waste and losses hides: In time of May  
'Round nests forsook in shivering orchards bare  
She flings her wreaths abloom, and, blithe of air,  
Our trust entreats for what the Orioles say!  
Comes Autumn brown and lo! a cheat supreme  
Where blossom's pledge was false to blighted fruit!  
Yet, ah! the rosy transport of the Dream  
Before the petals fell or song was mute,  
The faith elate, th' apocalyptic Day,  
Compensate for the life lived after May!

## QUENCH NOT THE FIRES

**Q**UENCH not the fires that burn within the  
soul  
E'en though the world smiles chill upon  
their glow:

But feed those lonely fires which flicker low  
With all that's best out of thy fortune's dole:  
Thine ease consume, content, and proud control,  
And love—dear love! Some hearts must bear to  
know

This last bereavement—love consumed—if so  
They feed the fires which burn within the soul  
Its utmost to inspire. The flames may blind,  
To ashes turn the toys thou did'st adore;  
But trust the light that shines. Fear not to mind  
The inner impulse urging thee from shore  
On stormy ventures. Quickened thy desires  
For ports beyond thy sight. Quench not the fires!

## TEMPERAMENT

**S**TRONG souls, who seek through rending  
tumult name  
For their emotions — eagle-beakèd brood —  
Create 'twixt hope and fear some symbol  
rude

Of that conceived within. For love and fame —  
Careless of shallow praise or shallower blame —  
They shape the visioned forms which still elude  
The comprehension of the multitude,  
And serve, devout, the Offspring which they claim.  
These are the souls who seek the Absolute  
In high conceits: entreat their verity  
Of human lives, of stars, and mountains mute;  
Limners elect — high priests of ecstasy —  
They mold, with reverent hand and ardent heart,  
Truth's bold reflection fair, — the mask is Art.

## CHOOSING


*"When half-gods go, the gods arrive."*

**N**OT to the cricket shrill through lonesome  
eve  
Nor to the crimson bough above the pool—  
Mere incidents of Summer's passing rule  
Who with it pass nor know to hope or grieve;—  
To man alone 'tis given to perceive  
That, after all, Fate is no poor misrule,  
But rather an inexorable school  
Wherein he learns to endure and to achieve.  
Yet some there are who learn the first alone,  
Supinely learn to bear without complaint:  
Better that riskier wisdom gods condone,  
Some part to act—as sinner or as saint—  
Winning maybe, or, failing, to retreat  
Still armed and upright before full defeat.



## NEGLECT

*"Lofty—still loftier than the world suspects."*

 HERE was a Book that bore a message  
kind  
From a full heart to an expected friend,  
But no such reader chanced this Book to  
find

And such as read there failed to comprehend:  
The title's tarnished now, the leaves are loose,  
This clever book has fallen to decay;  
Wantonly slighted, warped from long abuse,  
None saw the light that on its pages lay.  
Yet was its message worthy to be heard  
Ere careless touch had blurred what insight penned,  
For some faint hint of an inspired word  
Clung to the faded pages to the end,—  
The aura of some high-born task well done,—  
What matters all the rest, neglected One?


## IN THE MAKING

*"The purpose of life is not happiness but development."*

**O**NE glimpse of beauty ere the clouds o'er-  
cast  
The rose of dawn! One moment when we  
lean

Toward love triumphant till doubts intervene  
And in their shadow Love and Dawn go past.  
One little glimpse!—and then while life may last  
With lowered eyes we plod a toilsome mean,  
That which we would and must stand faint between,  
Or see our strength by others' strength surpassed.  
Yet is there solace for his hampered lot  
Whose hurts are laid 'neath patient Nature's spell;  
Feast of the eye, thrill of the heart are not  
Her purpose set. Sufficient 'tis and well  
When pain and joy have borne their fruitage ripe,  
She finds within her world some nobler type.

## JUDGED BY THE SPHINX

HE Theban Sphinx who watched the road  
along,  
With brooding eyes upon the moving  
mass,

Cried, "Halt! and Guess my Riddle ere you pass—  
Why is Truth's quest the Right—all else the  
Wrong?"

In state advanced the leader of the throng—  
An autocrat whom none in pomp surpass—  
Flatterers and slaves he hears, but not, alas!  
The still, small voice which makes the spirit strong.  
He cannot answer what the Sphinx demands,  
No time has he to judge 'twixt false and true!  
"The world needs only him who understands  
This difference," quoth the questioner. She grew  
Colossal, cried: "Thus, sightless soul, atone!"  
And crushed a despot 'gainst her breast of stone.

## GEORGE MEREDITH

**W**ITH sovran strength he plied his lofty art,  
Touched the world's pulse and felt its tell-  
tale beat,  
Yet nowise judged Success, nor yet Defeat.  
Anon to us he spake; anon, apart;  
And balanced held the speculative dart  
His genius winged through ancient Forms effete,  
Through Pedant, Egoist, and Splendid Cheat,  
To sink and quiver in the Modern Heart.  
He's gone! But what he wrought's forever Real!  
Think of his Child of light condemned to pay  
The costs of Love; of Adriatic's breeze  
And Otley's sullen waves wherein we feel  
The Tragedy of type that lives for aye  
In Mad Commander and his French Marquise!

## OUT OF THE EAST

On the defeat of Italian troops in Abyssinia by Menelek, March 23, 1896.

**O**UT of the East—like Baal of the past  
A thing of fear—a creature of the night,  
A Power of Darkness threatening Europe's  
light,

Has risen—like a huge Iconoclast!  
But noble land there is of resource vast,  
And noble race elect to stay this blight:  
Already art thou girding for the fight,  
O English land! Thy whole heroic past  
And crucial present bid thee draw the sword  
This battle royal for the world to gain,  
And all thy Kinsmen pledge thee Time's reward  
For standards bravely borne with cost and pain  
Where English valor, conquering, strikes the spark  
That lightens all the dull barbaric Dark!

## VIKINGS

**N**ROM stormy shores, red-bearded Norseman  
bold,—  
From stormy shores over an unknown sea  
Thou cam'st,—yet left not to futurity  
Record of conflict fierce for power or gold;  
No lands despoiled, no captives sought to hold.  
Soul-stirred with novel joy! elate with free  
Dream of illimitable liberty,—  
Thou cam'st,—and went,—thy story strange untold.  
Yet still while poets sing they'll celebrate  
The fair-haired crew who roamed Rhode Island's  
shore;  
Still with their haunting presence consecrate  
Wild Vinland and bleak coast: and, evermore,  
On reckless bark which to the gale puts forth,  
See phantom Vikings steering for the North.

## MY BOOKS

**I** LOVE you well, beloved! Companions  
dear,  
There was a time when other friends were  
few,

Dull days, dark years through which I found in you  
The bread to strengthen and the wine to cheer.  
Lewes! 't was through thy subtle insight clear  
I first divined the dispensation new:  
Then, Laureate, burst thy vision on my view —  
Of "statelier Edens" seen from poet's sphere.  
Pale Bronté, and thou stronger woman-soul,  
Your patient strength has lightened all my load;  
Spencer! thy mighty grasp will ere control  
My toiling thought along truth's arduous road.  
Each page meets eyes of mine with charmed looks,  
My heart is yours, O little band of books!

## GREEK ART

**E**MBODIED Beauty with indwelling Soul  
Survives in what it wrought; but goddess  
fair  
And columned Temple move us to despair

Of emulation: From beyond the goal  
At which we pause, Greek Art surveyed the Whole  
Of Life; espoused its Scheme; untrammelled dare  
Attempt the heavenly Heights, where blows an air,  
Native to those the Muses Nine enroll.  
Reverent — not craven — toward the Unknown  
Power  
It found and feared not; with serenity  
Trusting itself to Growth, as any flower  
Unfolds out of an inmost symmetry,  
The Art of Greece — untouched by primal ban —  
“Pursue Perfection!” cries to downcast Man.



## PENALTY

*"Pleads for itself the fact—  
As Nature, unrepentant, leaves her every act."*

**O** GREAT grey Waves that clamor to the  
shore  
And leap against the cliffs with loud assault  
Of gathered thunders from that mystic  
vault

Whose limits ending still stretch on before;  
O lion waves with mad heroic roar  
Deafening to meaner sounds 'gainst black basalt  
Of frowning cliff!—I count it as the fault  
Of partial comprehension to deplore  
That law which drives unerring to their bounds  
Life's mighty forces—love where love belongs,  
Failures, successes—in the unending rounds  
Where Nemesis rebukes ancestral wrongs  
With penalties, wherefrom no power to save  
Between the iron cliff and breaking wave!

## SPECULATION

*"Sans me plaindre ou m'effrayer,  
Je vais où va toute chose,  
Où va la feuille de rose  
Et la feuille de laurier."*

**H**ND is death then a victory or defeat,  
Transition unremembered, or the end  
Of conscious being, point where Self shall  
blend

With Other, Real and Apparent meet  
In that which gives, and takes, and is complete?  
Or is this true — as oft you tell me, friend —  
What's here amiss by death at last we'll mend;  
Through finite pain progression infinite?  
Dear Soul! thou sail'st amain but never yet  
A resting-place has found for stretchèd wing!  
Faint sounds thy call of hope, thy cry of threat,  
To other soul that goes not voyaging  
But learns, attent, the laws of limits set,  
And bends to daily stint, as bow to string.



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